The Grace of God in the Old Testament

Introduction of 2 Kings 5:1-19a

"I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11 ESV).

All throughout God's revelation, the Creator and Redeemer of all mankind reveal Himself as the God of the entire universe. In the days of the Kings of Israel, the prophets of Yahweh understood the covenant God of Israel was also the God of all mankind. Unlike the pagan polytheistic nations that surrounded Israel, the one true living God was proclaimed by God's appointed prophets, not as a god among many gods, but as the one true God. He is the sovereign God who alone rules the nations and in whom alone one finds mercy and grace. At the same time, God established a covenant with people and provided them His holy laws, all nations and all peoples owed their allegiance to Him. The Prophet Elijah's encounter and defeat of the prophets of the false god Baal, and the hearty response of the covenant people of Yahweh, exemplified for Israel and the Baal worshippers that "the Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God." (I Kings 18:39) Nevertheless, with dire consequences many in Israel persistently followed the false gods of the nearby nations. The true prophets of Yahweh continually warned the covenant people to repent of their idolatry and declare their allegiance to the LORD. In this context of repeated idolatry, the prophet Elisha appears on the scene in Israel. Endowed by God with a "double portion" [1] of his predecessor Elijah's spirit, Elisha's ministry of deliverance and miracles extended to Israel and others outside of the covenant nation. This ministry would affirm the

[1] Much debate exists about the exact meaning of "double portion." Some have suggested a link to the law of God respecting the rights of a first-born male born to a woman whose husband has multiple wives. See Deuteronomy 17:15-17.

eternal God's absolute sovereignty and gracious nature. It would also affirm the words spoken many years later by the greatest of all prophets, the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "Many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11 ESV). As an example of the broad and effective ministry of Elisha, we are introduced to Naaman, a man of high stature, living to the north of the land of Israel in the country of Syria.[2]

A Narrative of 2 Kings 5:1-19a

In chapter 5 of II Kings, the narrator shifts his attention to a new account of the life and ministry of the prophet Elisha that places focus on the prophet's ministry to a non-Israelite. A man named Naaman is presented to the readers. He is a commander in the army of the king of Syria[3]. He is described as a "mighty man of valour" (2 Kings 5:1). The Hebrew describes Naaman as a גִּבּוֹר "gibbowr."[4] This is a Hebrew word used to describe a person of valour. He was a strong and valiant man who served with distinction in the army of the Syrian king. The name Naaman means "gracious." Wiseman writes, "Naaman, a name common in Syria (Alalakh and Ras Shaamra texts[5]), means gracious."[6] Naaman is also described as a "great man with his master and in high favor." (2 Kings 5:1). Here, the Hebrew describes Naaman as a גָּדוֹל "gadowl"[7] man. The word means great. He was great in the eyes of his master, the king.

[2] Syria is the Greek name for Aram.
[3] While chapter 5 of 2 Kings does not reveal the name of the Syrian king, it could be Ben Hadad III who is mentioned as a king during the time of Elisha's ministry. This is the king who had made a truce with Israel. See 2 Kings 8:7. Some also believe it could be Ben Hadad I.
[4] This Hebrew word is frequently used in the Old Testament. It is the same word used to describe the "mighty men" who surrounded King David. See 2 Samuel 16:6 and 23:22. The word was also used by the angel of the Lord when the angel first addressed Gideon. "The Lord is with you, O mighty man ("gibbowr") of valor." Judges 6:12
[5] Ancient tablets or plates with inscriptions found in 1937 by Sir Leonard Woolley during an excavation in Syria. Ras Shaamra was located in Western Syria near the Mediterranean Sea. This was the site of ancient Ugarit.
[6] Donald J. Wiseman, 1, 2 Kings (Tyndale OTC 9: Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993) 206.
[7] It is the same description of King David in 2 Samuel 5:10 where David "grew *great* and the Lord God of Hosts was with him."

Moreover, the narrator tells us why the king considered Naaman outstanding. He writes, "Because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria."[8] (2 Kings 5:1) Naaman was a military man who, by the sovereign hand of God, won military campaigns. This endeared him greatly to the king of Syria.

While Naaman was highly respected in the eyes of the king of Syria and undoubtedly in the eyes of his countrymen, Naaman had a serious physical ailment. As verse 1 of 2 Kings 5 succinctly explains, "he was a leper."[9] This highly valued mighty man of valor had a chronic skin condition[10]. The magnitude of the problem was of such a degree that Naaman approached the king of Syria with a special request. Naaman's request to the king resulted from a word spoken to Naaman's wife by a young[11] Israelite slave girl. The Syrians had captured the girl during one of their raids in the land of Israel. She was put into servitude, ultimately becoming a slave girl in the home of Naaman. She was familiar with the ministry of the prophet Elisha. She said to Naaman's wife, "Would that my lord was with the prophet who is in Samaria. He would cure him of his leprosy." (2 Kings 5:4). More importantly, she was acquainted with Elisha in his role as "prophet." She knew he was the very mouthpiece of the covenant God of whom she

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[8] The LORD is active not just in Israel but is sovereign in the affairs of all nations and individuals. This is perhaps the first hint in the story that Naaman was a "choice" individual, and God was at work in his life.

[9] There is discussion among commentators if Naaman had actual leprosy (Hansen's disease) or some other form of skin affliction. Some argue it is likely he did not have a contagious disease otherwise it is doubtful he could continue to serve the king of Syria so openly. See 2 Kings 5:4 where Naaman freely approaches the king. Some believe it is more likely Naaman had some skin problem that though troubling was more an aesthetic concern than a disease warranting isolation or quarantine.

[10] Konkel writes that the Hebrew word group צָרַע 'tsara' forms a generic term for a variety of cutaneous diseases, most of which were benign. The signs and symptoms of leprosy in Leviticus are generally considered to preclude Hansen's disease with its symptomatic swellings, facial distortions, and mutilations." August H. Konkel, 1, 2 Kings (NIV AC: Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006) 427

[11] "The word "young" in verse 2 is translated "little" in several versions of the Bible (KJV, NAU, NJB), and "young" in others (NIV, NKJV). The word in the original text seems to be almost the opposite of the word "respected" in 2 Kings 4:8, describing the Shunammite woman. I believe the author is not only telling us that this "little" girl is "young," but that she is a person of no social standing whatever. She is the bottom rung of the Syrian social ladder." Bob Deffinbaugh, "The Life and Times of Elisha the Prophet – The Healing of Naaman," Bible.org, http://bible.org/seriespage/life-and-times-elisha-prophet—-healing-naaman-2-kings-51-27 (accessed May 29th, 2013)

learned in the land of her heritage before she was captured and exiled to Syria. In no bitterness of spirit and with an eye towards the benefit of her captor, the slave girl confidently reports to her mistress the renown of the mighty prophet.[12] There is no doubt in her mind that Elisha could heal her master. The mistress, in turn, would communicate to her husband the hopeful news of a way of healing.

Once Naaman heard that a prophet in Samaria could heal him of his skin affliction, he went to speak to his "lord," the king of Syria. Undoubtedly, his objective was to receive permission to travel to northern Israel. The king responded very favorably, allowing Naaman to leave immediately for Samaria. Before Naaman's departure, the king prepared and sent a letter[13] to the king

The letter's content was not revealed immediately but was revealed later upon receipt by the king of Israel. The king of Syria wrote, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of leprosy." (2 Kings 5:6). Regardless of the relatively large amount of riches[14] brought by Naaman as a gift to the king of Israel, the king was horrified by the contents of the letter! He immediately suspected his old nemesis, Syria, was looking to wage war against Israel. He reacts by saying, "Consider and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me." (2 Kings 5:7)

The prophet Elisha somehow heard of the king of Israel's dilemma. Having a concern for the glory of God, Elisha sent word to the king saying, "Let him come to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel." (2 Kings 5:8). The end result was Naaman, along with an

[12] House writes of the slave girl's actions, "In this way she acts like Daniel, Mordecai, Ezra, Nehemiah, and other exiles who care for the spiritual and physical well-being of their conquerors. Paul R. House, 1, 2 Kings (NAC 8; Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1995) 272

[13] In ancient times the practice of sending letters on medical matters from one king to another king was not unusual. Wiseman references this practice found within the "Mari, Hittite and Assyrian archives." Wiseman, 1, 2 Kings, 207

[14] Konkel writes that Naaman took with him "five times the amount of silver required to purchase the hill of Samaria (cf. 1 Kings 16:24), plus six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of garments." Konkel, 1, 2 Kings, 428.

entourage ("horses and chariots" 2 Kings 5:9) stood at the door of Elisha's house. While Naaman stood at the door, expecting to meet and greet the famous prophet he had heard so much about, Elisha sent a messenger with a message to Naaman. The messenger's word was not well received by the Syrian commander. Elisha's message was to "go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored, and you shall be clean." (2 Kings 5:10). The narrator tells us that Naaman "went away" filled with contempt and anger.[15] He was no doubt offended that Elisha did not personally greet him. In a culture in which hospitality was extremely important the action of Elisha was hard for Naaman to accept. His pride was very much bruised! "He turned and went away in rage." (2 Kings 5:12)

Once again, Naaman's servants provided him with the assistance he required. As the slave girl had informed Naaman's wife of the ministry of Elisha, the servants of Naaman who had accompanied him on his trip to Samaria convinced the commander that Elisha was not asking a great task of him. All he had to do was "Wash and be clean." (2 Kings 5:13). Naaman finally agreed, and in obedience to the word of the prophet, he went to the Jordan River and was cleansed of his skin ailment. "So, he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." (2 Kings 5:14)

Naaman's response to this incredible healing and restoration was gratitude to Elisha and reverence to Yahweh.[16] He exclaims with no uncertainty, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so, accept now a present from your servant." (2 Kings 5:15) The

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[15] Davis has an apropos reference from Ray Dillard's book "Faith in the Face of Apostasy." He writes, "Naaman expected Israel's God and prophet to be just like what he had known at home: itching palms and magic shows. He had brought plenty of money, and so he expected the prophet to deliver on the magic. Naaman wanted 'vending machine grace'-put your money in and take your blessing. The prophet was expected to appear, accept the pay, and 'wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy.'" Davis, 1, 2 Kings, 90.

[16] After the healing 5 times Naaman refers to himself as a servant. He is no longer full of pride and thinking he knows what is best!

encounter with God while in the Jordan River produced humility in the heart of this mighty warrior. Naaman has been physically changed, but in a more profound sense, he has been spiritually changed! He was now resolute that his worship would be dedicated to the true God! No longer would he involve himself in the worship of pagan deities! He says, "From now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the Lord. "(2 Kings 5:17)

Historical Context of 2 Kings 5:1-19a

The account of the healing/conversion of Naaman in the first nineteen verses of 2 Kings Chapter five provides an example of a historical narrative during the time of the Syrian commander and the ministry of the prophet Elisha. The historical story takes place in or around the time of frequent Aramean battles with the northern kingdom of Israel. While it is difficult to pinpoint an exact date on which the event of Naaman's healing occurred, there are helpful details in the narration and other pertinent portions of Scripture. In addition, specific timelines emerge when we use the chapter's location in 2 Kings within Elisha's ongoing life and ministry. Elisha was the immediate successor to the prophet Elijah. Some place the date of Elisha replacing Elijah near the middle of the 9th century BC. One Old Testament historian writing about Elijah and Elisha says, "The fellowship was apparently begun with Elijah's anointing of Elisha in about 855 BC."[17]

We know that Elisha ministered during the reign of Ben-Hadad, king of Aram (Syria). It is quite probable this was the king who was so fond of Naaman. Both 2 Kings, Chapters 6 and 8, specifically cite Ben-Hadad during the same timeframe as Elisha the prophet.[18] There are historical records of at least three Syrian kings with Ben-Hadad as part of their title. Most believe

[17] Eugene H. Merrill, "Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel," Baker Academic (2008): 395.
[18] The king of Syria was very ill. Elisha was in Damascus. Word was sent to him from the king asking Elisha if he (the king) would recover. See 2 Kings 8:8-10.

the Ben-Hadad[19] of chapter 8 was Ben-Hadad II, named Hadadeser.[20] This king reigned for most of the second half of the 9th century.

During the last half of the ninth century BC, the division of Israel and Judah was firmly entrenched. Paul R. House provides a historical description of this time period. He writes, "Internal and external problems forced Judah and Israel into their lowest point of power and influence since the division itself. Vassals rebelled, old foes rose again, new foes emerged, land was lost, kings were assassinated, and armies were beaten time and time again."[21]

During this time, scripture also indicates Israel had trouble with Moab. Moab was located directly south of the portion of the land given to the tribe of Reuben. Moab was due east of Judah, separated by the Salt Sea. House again comments on the historical details surrounding the ministry of Elisha. He writes, "Israel's external woes began with Moab's rebellion against its vassal status. During Ahab's reign, Mesha[22], Moab's king, paid tribute in the form of lambs and wool to the Israelite monarch (2 Kings 3:4). When Ahab died, however, Mesha withheld tribute, causing Joram, aided by Jehoshaphat, to invade Moab (2 Kings 3:5-23). Despite suffering an initial defeat, Mesha was able to drive his enemies back to their home bases (2 Kings 3:24-27), and apparently, he never paid tribute again."[23]

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[19] Hadad was the proper name of the senior Aramean deity.

[20] Wiseman, commenting on 2 Kings 8:7-15 writes, "Ben-Hadad, probably a throne-name of the king of Damascus (Aram) 844-818 BC, is here the second holder of that title whose personal name was Hadadeser (Assyr. Adad-idri). He is mentioned in Assyrian annals during the eighteenth (840 BC and twenty-first year (837) campaigns of Shalmaneser III, king of Assyria. Wiseman, 1, 2 Kings, 213 It should be mentioned that there is debate among commentators as to which Ben Hadad (king) is referred to in 2 Kings 5. Many think it is Ben-Hadad I.

[21] House 1, 2 Kings, 253

[22] This is the same Mesha known for the archaeological discovery called Mesha Stele. A stele is an inscribed stone. The Mesha Stele is dated at 835 BC. The stone describes how Chemosh, the pagan god of Moab, was angry with his people and made them servants to Israel. Later Chemosh helped Mesha to restore the land back to Moab. This stone is particularly famous because it is one of only two known non-biblical references to the "house of David." The other non-biblical reference is the Tell Dan inscription (or Tell Dan Stele). In 1868 the Mesha Stone was found in the former Moab territory at Dhiban. See Philip E. Satterhwaite & J. Gordon McConville "Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Historical Books, Vol. 2," IVP (2007): 159.

[23] House 1, 2 Kings, 253

In addition to Moab, Syria also produced considerable problems for Israel during the middle to later part of the 9th century BC. In 2 Kings 6:24-30 Syria besieged Samaria. This event occurred toward the end of Ben-Hadad's term as king.[24] When Ben-Hadad died[25], a new king named Hazael reigned in Syria. Hazael's reign as the king of Syria dates from 842 – 806 BC. This is the king that Elisha recognized as one who would cause significant problems for Israel.[26] It is clear from the Scripture accounts that Hazael was ruthless. This prophecy regarding Hazael came to pass when the Syrian forces defeated the armies of Israel under King Jehu in 2 Kings 10:32-33. Hazael also forced Judah to pay tribute to him, or he would impose a siege on Jerusalem (2 Kings 12:17-18).[27]

To summarize, the times in which Naaman lived and in which Elisha ministered were, in general, troubling and challenging political times for the northern kingdom. Some respite, however, must have been achieved during the specified timeframe of our study. The fact that the Syrian king would write a letter to the king of Israel is indicative that, at least at that time, relations were cordial. Some have suggested, and perhaps with merit, that there was a truce between Syria and Israel at that time. If this is the case, it was likely near the time that Elisha traveled to the city of Damascus when the king of Aram was ill. This is described in detail in 2 Kings 8:7ff. On the other hand, there was not complete peace between Syria and Israel. It is clear

[24] "For a period of about 130 years the Syrians were ruled by the Ben-Hadad dynasty. Jim Winter, "Elisha," Day One Publications (2008): 59.
[25] It should be pointed out that Ben-Hadad was murdered when Hazael suffocated him using a heavy damp cloth. See 2 Kings 8:15.
[26] See 2 Kings 8:12 in which Elisha weeps over the harm Hazael will do to Israel after he becomes king.
[27] House writing on the historical background of Elisha's life says, "All the Israelite victories recounted in this section of the book (the author is referring to 2 Kings 2:1-13:25) were temporary respites from Hazael's power, not permanent reversals of his authority over the area. House, 1, 2 Kings, 254.

from the 2 Kings 5 narratives that Syrian raiding parties had gone into the land of Israel and brought captives back to Syria to serve as slaves! (2 Kings 2:2).[28]

While externally, the days in which Elisha lived were filled with political turmoil, the internal spiritual condition of the people of the northern kingdom was dismal. The true prophets of Yahweh continued to oppose the kings when opposition was necessary. The prophets did have the ability to group together and were not as scattered and persecuted as they were during the reign of King Ahab of Israel. We read in 2 Kings 4:38 about a "company of prophets" that met with Elisha upon his return to Gilgal. House writes, "Unlike during the earlier Jezebel-instigated persecutions, the prophets were allowed to flourish individually and in groups outside the palace. Prophetic guilds led by Elisha ate together (2 Kings 4:38-41), worked together (2 Kings 6:1-7), and may have dressed alike or cut their hair the same (2 Kings 2:23). This organized group gave the king no comfort. They were different from the syncretistic court prophets maintained by the king."[29] In summary the era in which both Naaman and Elisha lived were days of internal and external chaos in the countries in which they lived. The expansion of Elisha's ministry to a non-Israelite during these days is a testimony to the graciousness and mercy of the true God! It is a testimony that salvation is of the LORD!

Literary Considerations of 2 Kings 5:1-19a

The author of 2 Kings 5 introduces Naaman as the main character in the story. He is introduced as a great man needing to overcome a specific affliction. Though Naaman is the main character, as the story unfolds, we learn it is a story of contrasts between multiple characters.

[28] While the syntax of the beginning of 5:2 does seem to support that the raids happened in the past, what is unknown is how long in the past they occurred. If we assume the "young girl" is still relatively young we could surmise the date of the raids were not too far in the past.
[29] House, 1, 2 Kings, 254,255

For example, there is the contrast between a believing captive "young girl" [30] in verses 2 – 4 with a terrified unbelieving king of Israel in verses 5 - 8. In this contrast, Davis writes, "Mrs. Naaman's girl is full of expectation and confidence, Israel's king of full of dread and dismay." [31] This contrast is also highlighted by the fact that in the narrative, the prophet Israel takes the initiative to seek out the frightened king of Israel. This contrasts the faith and confidence of the young captive girl!

Another contrast highlighted in the narrative is between Elisha and Naaman. In verses 9 – 10, Elisha clearly and calmly instructs Naaman to wash in the Jordan River. On the other hand, Naaman bursts out in a rage of anger. Thus, we see that one of the literary structures the author builds in the narrative is character contrasts.

A very key structure in the account of Naaman's healing is problem and resolution. The story starts off with a definite problem. It is a note of tragedy. The great Syrian military man, beloved by the king, is a leper. This problem is in desperate need of resolution. The question one might ask is how Naaman will be healed. That is the literary problem that this story seeks to resolve. In answer to the problem, the story introduces a multiplicity of characters. Naaman, his wife, the young girl, the king of Aram, the king of Israel, the great renowned prophet Elisha, the servant of Naaman, and an implied messenger who carried the king's letter.[32] Commenting on this abundance of characters and the relationship to problem resolution, T.R. Hobbs writes,

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[30] One has to love the rich comments of dear Matthew Henry about the "young girl. "He writes, "The unhappy dispersing of the people of God has sometimes proved the happy occasion of the diffusion of the knowledge of God. This little maid, as became a true Israelite, consulted the honor of her country and could give an account, though but a girl, of the famous prophet they had among them. Children should be times acquaint themselves with the wondrous works of God, that wherever they go, they may have them to talk of." Matthew Henry, Joshua to Esther Vol. 2 (McLean,: MacDonald Publishing, 1712 reprint) 732.

[31] Davis 2 Kings, 88

[32] While the story does not explicitly name the "postman" it seems unlikely that a military commander, especially of the stature of Naaman, could approach the king of Israel himself to deliver the letter! Therefore a messenger should be assumed.

"With the marked increase in characters comes an increase in the number of subplots and scene changes which enhance the main incident of the encounter between Naaman and Elisha."[33] Each character in the narrative has a key role in resolving the problem (Naaman's need for healing).

In the account in which sub-plots develop, such as the young girl's faith or the king of Israel's lack of faith, et cetera, each sub-plot works towards moving the main plot along, ultimately leading to the resolution. Each sub-plot has a definite purpose. An example is the young girl from Israel. While the reader feels a sense of horror at the thought of this poor girl being taken from her homeland, it becomes clear that in the sovereignty of God, a definite plan is unfolding. Like centuries before, when a young Joseph was wickedly sold by his brothers and placed in bondage to serve an Egyptian military man, so this young girl is placed in bondage to serve a Syrian military man. In both cases, that was not the end of the story! Joseph could ultimately say to his brothers, "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God,"[34]; in the same manner, the Israelite servant girl in Syria one day could say these exact words to Naaman!

The young girl's godly character becomes a tremendous example to readers of this story. Her lack of bitterness under difficult circumstances and her resolve to honor the God of Israel speak loudly to all believers in Christ and serve as positive exemplary exegesis. She was indeed a faithful witness to God!

The story of 2 Kings 5 is a classic "comic"[35] plot. The tragedy of Naaman's skin disease is resolved by the power of the God of Israel through His appointed instrument, Elisha. The plot ultimately ends (resolution) with Naaman's physical and, even more importantly, spiritual healing. The story is full of transitions. There are ups and downs. There are many scene changes

[33] T. R. Hobbs 2 Kings (WORD Biblical Commentary 13; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985) 59
[34] Genesis 45:8
[35] A comic plot: "the character goes through very difficult times but overcomes these problems by the end of the story – U-shaped plot." Dr. Richard Belcher's lecture notes Judges to Esther, RTS Virtual 2010 page 3.

as Naaman travels from Syria to meet Elisha (likely in Gilgal). On multiple occasions, Naaman seems frustrated with the opportunity to be healed. The king of Israel is a key problematic source (verse 7). Then, Naaman becomes the problem's source (verses 11, 12). However, the narrator is determined to show readers that God's purposes cannot be frustrated or stopped! In each case, Elisha comes to the rescue and, marvelously, provides the solution! The miracle of healing finally resolves the conflict!

The final question to address is the genre of 2 Kings 5: 1-19a. On this matter, multiple genres might apply. Certainly, there is an element of historical narrative. The account of the miracle of Naaman's skin disease by the mighty prophet of Israel tells readers what happened. We are not reading fables or fairy tales when reading God's Word. The story describes factual events in Naaman's life and Elisha's ministry. The historical events did occur!

About genre, what is most suited to this account is history from a theological perspective. The story of the inclusion, universal ministry, and blessings of this non-Israelite[36] soldier speak powerfully and clearly of God working out his purposes in history for the good of Gentiles. This also fits very well with the declaration and prophecy of the prophet Isaiah. "The Sovereign Lord declares, he who gathers the exiles of Israel: I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered." (Isaiah 56:8 NIV) It also fits very well with the words of the Savior in

[36] Not only is Naaman a non-Israelite but to many he would have been considered an enemy! Given the many battles between the northern kingdom of Israel and Syria, the Syrian commander would NOT have been known as a friend to Israel. In a footnote T.R. Hobbs sites Josephus (Antiquities. XV. 5) who states that Naaman was the slayer of King Ahab! See T.R. Hobbs, 2 Kings, 63. While that cannot be substantiated in Scripture, 2 Chronicles 18:28-34 does describe Ahab's death. It was at Ramoth Gilead in a battle with Aram (Syria). In that passage the Syrian "chariot commanders" were very much present. Perhaps in that battle so was Naaman? In addition, Hobbs writes that the Targum aligns Naaman with the death of King Ahab. "The Targum was spoken paraphrases, explanations, and expansions of the Jewish scriptures that a Rabbi would give in the common language of the listeners which was commonly, but not exclusively Aramaic." See "Targum," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Targum (accessed June 1, 2013). Since though it was a "random" arrow that hit Ahab it is hard to believe that a distinguish captain also carried and shot a bow and arrow!

Matthew 8, which was quoted earlier in this paper. This leads us directly to further theological considerations in the account of Naaman's healing and Elisha's ministry.

Theological Considerations of 2 Kings 5:1-19a

2 Kings 5:1-19a portrays many wonderful theological themes. Dale Ralph Davis aptly and wonderfully entitles his 2 Kings 5 chapter, "Grace Goes International."[37] The theme of grace is the underlying current running throughout the account of Naaman's miraculous healing experience. It should be no surprise that a foreigner[38] is invited to worship and serve Yahweh. In 1 Kings 8, King Solomon's prayer of dedication for the newly constructed temple directly references the non-Israelites who fear the true God. Solomon prays.

> "As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people, Israel, but has come from a distant land because of your name, for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm, when he comes and prays toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this h o use I have built bears your Name." (1 Kings 8:41-43)

As the Lord Jesus Christ performed miracles to benefit Israelites and Gentiles, Elisha's ministry was also universal enough to benefit those without Jewish heritage. Naaman's name means "gracious," so God demonstrates and extends his marvelous graciousness to Naaman! God Himself is the true gracious one!

In addition to the universality of the gracious work of God, this section of Holy Scripture teaches all to see the Sovereign nature of the true God. God is sovereign in all affairs, whether considered big or small. We have numerous examples in our passage and the other Elisha narratives in 2 Kings. In chapter 5, starting at the very beginning of the narration the writer is quick to point out the reason Naaman had success in his military campaigns, "through him the

[37] Davis, 2 Kings, 85

[38] I use the term foreigner in the manner that King Solomon uses that word in his temple dedication prayer. 1 Kings 8:41-43.

LORD had given victory to Aram." (2 Kings 5:1) Lest anyone should think that Yahweh is like the false deities of the ancient near eastern countries, who worked on behalf of their nation only, the sovereign God of Heaven and Earth controls the affairs of men, all nationalities, and all nations. In addition, as we have learned, a key resolution to Naaman's healing was God in His sovereignty, placing a poor captive girl into the household of Naaman. This was a critical catalyst required to bring her master to God's prophet so the work God had preordained would be completed. This truth reinforces what is central and is reiterated throughout the Word of God with remarkable consistency. The great truth of God's Word is "Salvation comes from the Lord." (Jonah 2:9). It was the same in ancient times, New Testament times, and today. While Naaman was healed of his skin affliction, the radical spiritual change in the commander's life is of profound importance.

Finally, we learn yet another great truth from this passage. When God works in a person's heart, that person is radically changed! Naaman's words, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel" (2 Kings 5:15), illustrate a changed heart. Not only was he changed of physical leprosy, but more marvelous was the blessing of being healed of his spiritual leprosy! Naaman was cleansed inside and outside! With the mouth, he confessed his allegiance to God and demonstrated faith! God's gracious work was done in his life![39] Beginning to end, the work was of God.

It is the same God today at work drawing the elect of God to the great prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ. May the Church join in this great ministry of inviting sinners to have their sins washed away through the precious blood of Christ! May God, who cleansed this Syrian soldier, cleanse multitudes to the glory of Christ!

[39] "Those are best able to speak of the power of divine grace who have themselves experience it." Henry, Joshua to Esther, 736